



Department of Public Health

September 19, 2014

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10:15 A.M. FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2014

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Health Department Investigates TB Exposure at Local Hospital

Press conference scheduled to answer questions and ease concerns

El Paso, Texas – The City of El Paso Department of Public Health (DPH) has determined that more than 700 patients and more than 40 employees were exposed to a hospital employee with an active case of Tuberculosis (TB) in the post-partum and newborn nursery area of Providence Memorial Hospital (PMH). This exposure took place between September 2013 and August 2014. The DPH is working closely with the staff of PMH and has carefully reviewed employment and medical records to determine exactly which infants and employees were exposed. The families of each patient are being contacted via telephone and certified letter with proactive screening instructions.

To date, 706 patients and 43 exposed employees have been identified. Post-exposure screen and follow-up will be provided free of charge through the DPH and PMH. Public Health officials are collaborating with state officials and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to facilitate these screenings.

Officials with the DPH, PMH, and El Paso City/County Health Authority Dr. Hector Ocaranza will be available to answer questions during a press conference to take place:

Friday, September 19, 2014

City of El Paso Department of Public Health

5115 El Paso Dr.

10:00 a.m.

In addition to answering questions regarding this investigation, the main purpose of this press conference is to remind parents who receive a letter from the DPH that they should contact the El Paso Department of Public Health by calling 2-1-1 Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to schedule an appropriate TB screen. *(These numbers will also be active this weekend, Saturday and Sunday, September 20 and 21, 2014 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)*

(-MORE-)



Department of Public Health
5115 El Paso Drive | El Paso, Texas 79905 | (915) 771-5702

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Department of Public Health

Tuberculosis can be spread when a person with active TB disease coughs or sneezes, releasing secretion droplets with the germs into the air. However, TB is not highly contagious and generally requires close contact over an extended period of time in order to be spread.

Once in the body the bacteria usually lay dormant for months or years before they begin to grow and cause a case of active TB. That is why it is so important to identify people who may have been exposed, screen them, and provide treatment that can prevent them from ever developing active TB disease. Only persons with active TB disease can spread TB bacteria to others. Before you would be able to spread TB to others, you would have to breathe in TB bacteria and develop active infection. Additional information about TB can be found at www.EPHealth.com.

The El Paso Department of Public Health and Providence Memorial Hospital are working closely with Texas State Health officials and the CDC to protect our community and to preserve the health of all.

The mission of the Department of Public Health is to provide research and evaluation, prevention, intervention, and mobilization services to the people of El Paso so they can be healthy, productive, safe and secure. For more information on the programs and services offered by the Department of Public Health, visit www.EPHealth.com or dial 2-1-1.

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